



PA 23-70—sHB 5441

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING CLINICAL PLACEMENTS FOR NURSING STUDENTS, REPORTING BY THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE STRATEGY, PROMOTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY AND CONNECTICUT HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPLEMENTAL LOAN AUTHORITY STUDENT LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAMS FOR VARIOUS PROFESSIONS

SUMMARY: This act makes the following changes to higher education statutes and programs:

1. creates an 11-member task force to develop a plan for establishing clinical placements at state facilities for nursing students (§ 1);
2. makes permanent the requirement for the Chief Workforce Officer to annually report to the governor and certain legislative committees on the Office of Workforce Strategy's (OWS) workforce training programs (§ 2);
3. requires the insurance commissioner to promote the development and growth of, and employment opportunities within, the state's insurance industry (§ 3);
4. makes paraeducators and school counselors eligible for the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority's (CHESLA) Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program (§§ 4 & 5);
5. requires CHESLA to establish a Police Officer Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible police officers employed in distressed municipalities (§ 6); and
6. expands the CHESLA loan subsidy program for certain health care professionals created by PA 23-60 to also include emergency medical service (EMS) professionals (§§ 7 & 8).

The act also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023, except the provisions expanding Alliance District teacher loan subsidy program eligibility and establishing the police officer student loan subsidy program take effect on January 1, 2024, and the task force provision is effective upon passage.

§ 1 — NURSING STUDENT CLINICAL PLACEMENT TASK FORCE

Duties

The act creates a task force to develop a plan for establishing clinical placements for nursing students at public and private higher education institutions. In developing the plan, the task force must examine the following:

1. the types of state facilities that can accommodate these clinical placements,

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including state correctional facilities and facilities operated by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS);

2. the number and types of placements that may be established at each facility;
3. the staffing requirements for providing the placements and the facilities' compliance with them; and
4. the total and per-student cost to the facilities to provide the placements.

Membership

Under the act, the task force consists of 11 appointed members, with the commissioners of corrections, public health, DMHAS, DCF, and DDS, and the six legislative leaders appointing one member each. The corrections commissioner's appointment must be a licensed medical provider the corrections department employs, and the other commissioner appointments must be registered nurses employed by each respective agency. The legislative leaders must each appoint a nursing program administrator from specified institutions as follows: House speaker (UConn), Senate president pro tempore (independent higher education institution), House majority leader (state university within the Connecticut State University System), Senate majority leader (regional community-technical college), House minority leader (independent higher education institution), and Senate minority leader (UConn Health Center).

The appointing authorities must make their initial appointments within 30 days after the act's passage (July 5, 2023) and fill any vacancies. Members appointed by the legislative leaders may be legislators.

Leadership, Staff, and Meetings

Under the act, the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the task force chairpersons from among its members. The chairpersons must schedule the task force's first meeting to be held within 60 days after the act's passage (August 4, 2023).

The act requires the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's administrative staff to serve in this capacity for the task force.

Report

The act requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee by January 1, 2024. The task force terminates on this date or when it submits the report, whichever is later.

§ 2 — OWS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The act makes permanent the requirement for the chief workforce officer to

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annually report on OWS workforce training programs to the governor and the Commerce; Education; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; Higher Education and Employment Advancement; and Labor and Public Employees committees. Prior law sunset the reporting requirement on October 1, 2025. By law, this report must include information on the number, demographics, and outcomes of program participants.

§§ 4 & 5 — ALLIANCE DISTRICT EDUCATOR AND COUNSELOR LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM

The act broadens eligibility under the Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program to include participation by paraeducators and school counselors and renames the program accordingly. By law, this program provides subsidized interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible borrowers employed in alliance districts, subject to available funding.

§ 6 — CHESLA POLICE OFFICER LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM

The act requires CHESLA, by July 1, 2024, to establish a Police Officer Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible sworn members of municipal police departments employed in distressed municipalities, subject to available funding. (The Department of Economic and Community Development annually designates distressed municipalities based on high unemployment and poverty, aging housing stock, and low or declining rates of job, population, and per capita income growth (CGS § 32-9p).)

CHESLA must maintain a separate, non-lapsing account to hold funds for the program required by law to be deposited there, including any state appropriation and the proceeds from bonds issued for the program's purposes.

Eligibility Criteria and Administrative Guidelines

The act requires CHESLA to establish the program's eligibility criteria and administrative guidelines in consultation with the Police Officer Standards Training Council. The criteria and guidelines must address at least the following:

1. applicant eligibility,
2. interest rate subsidies and principal limits,
3. the process for verifying applicants' employment, and
4. the requirement that an interest rate subsidy through the program ends if a recipient no longer meets the program's employment requirements during the loan's term.

Program Account Expenditures

Under the act, CHESLA must use the funds in the program's account to subsidize the program's loans and to:

1. cover reasonable and necessary expenses for program administration,

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2. issue authority loans to refinance one or more eligible loans, and
3. maintain a reserve for any losses from issuing authority loans.

“Authority loans” are education loans by CHESLA or CHESLA loans from the proceeds of bonds to fund education loans. “Eligible loans” are loans in repayment that were issued by CHESLA or another private or governmental lender to finance post-secondary education.

§§ 7 & 8 — CHESLA LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM FOR HEALTH CARE AND EMS PROFESSIONALS

PA 23-60 requires CHESLA to establish a Nursing and Mental Health Care Professionals Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA refinancing loans to certain Connecticut-licensed nurses, nurse’s aides, psychologists, marital and family therapists, clinical and master social workers, and professional counselors. This act broadens the program’s scope to include EMS professionals and correspondingly renames the program. Under the act, to qualify, the EMS professional must (1) be certified by the Department of Public Health as an emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, or advanced emergency medical technician; (2) be actively employed in an EMS setting; and (3) meet the program’s eligibility criteria and administrative guidelines set by CHESLA and the education commissioner.